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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MAYORS BLAME CHECKPOINT AND EACH OTHER FOR
JERUSALEM AREA VILLAGE COUNCIL SPLIT

REF: A. JERUSALEM 318
[B.](#) JERUSALEM 316
[C.](#) 07 JERUSALEM 2555

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1.](#) (C) Summary. Mayors of al-Khas (Khader Hamdan) and al-Nu'man (Yusif Darawi) villages -- in the Wets Bank south of Jerusalem and separated by the separation barrier -- blamed each other, as well as the separation barrier, for a late-2008 rupture in their joint village council. Darawi said the closure of the barrier near the village will further restrict already difficult access and movement for residents. End summary.

Formerly Joint Village Council
Splits Over Barrier and Politics

[2.](#) (C) Khader Hamdan, mayor of al-Khas (pop. 1000), and Yusif Darawi, mayor of al-Nu'man (pop. 200) gave separate but complementary descriptions of a late-2008 rupture in their previously-joint village council. Al-Khas and al-Nu'man are West Bank villages 500 meters apart, south of Jerusalem, and are divided by the separation barrier and Mazmuriya checkpoint. Residents of al-Khas, which is east of the barrier, have unrestricted access to the West Bank. Al-Nu'man, however, is west of the barrier, and residents must cross a checkpoint to access either Jerusalem or the West Bank. During a February 13 visit to al-Khas and al-Nu'man, Hamdan and Darawi told PolOff the two villages had decided in September/October 2008 to split the joint local council into two separate bodies.

[3.](#) (C) Speaking privately during a tour of al-Nu'man February 13, Darawi criticized the checkpoint situation, but laid most of the blame for the council split on poor political decisions made by Hamdan, who served as mayor of the joint council. Darawi said Hamdan was not evenhanded in his decisions regarding the two villages and kept development assistance and other funding for al-Khas's exclusive use.

[4.](#) (C) Hamdan, in a February 25 telcon, blamed the checkpoint and barrier for the split, saying that, as mayor of the joint council, he had not been allowed to enter al-Nu'man because his name was not on an access list maintained at the checkpoint. Hamdan insisted there were no lingering problems between the villages, but criticized al-Nu'man residents for lobbying the joint council to build a school in al-Nu'man. He said that al-Nu'man is too small to justify such an expenditure, and that children are able to attend school in al-Khas "without problems." (Comment: Hamdan is a Fatah activist. His inability to satisfy a large portion of his constituency is illustrative of the day-to-day challenges facing grassroots Fatah officials in the West Bank. End comment.)

15. (C) Residents of al-Nu'man told PolOff that the village is like a "third country," cut off from both Jerusalem and the West Bank, since the separation barrier was completed several hundred meters south of the village (ref C). Residents said the village is outside Jerusalem's municipal boundary and the GoI and the Jerusalem Municipality refuse to issue Jerusalem residency cards or provide municipal services there. Residents said recent GoI steps would further restrict their access in and out of the village. They expressed concern about the need to obtain permits and the consequences facing residents without permits.
WALLES